



[August 6, 2007, 4:28 pm]

"East Nashville Family Receives Heat Relief"

Amid the heat wave and without air conditioning, some Mid-State families are struggling to survive.

Now, one east Nashville family is no longer one of them .

On Monday, the thermometer inside Joann Whitaker's east Nashville apartment read a stunning 90 degrees.

Her five-year-old son Christopher has asthma and must stay by a fan, one of five, used to keep one small room cooler.

Over the weekend, Nashville's air quality was even worse than Los Angeles.

Whitaker: "It's miserable..."

News 2: "How have you been getting by?"

Whitaker: "Just using the fans, sticking them in cool water... just anything to keep them cool. My son, he has asthma and it's hard for him to breathe. My youngest daughter, I was up with her last night because she was coughing because it's so hot."

Fortunately, Monday, Whitaker and her family received a gift, one of more than 120 air conditioning units given away, for free, by the Metro Action Commission to families that can prove there's a medical or physical disability.

The Metro Action Commission said Whitaker's new air conditioning unit is worth \$230, something Whitaker and her family could not afford but really needed.

She said, "I'm grateful... very grateful."

Summer suddenly became healthier for Whitaker and her family.

The Metro Action Commission does not give the air conditioning units away for free based on financial hardship. You'll need a doctor's note to prove you have some sort of physical or medical disability.

It was a busy day for the agency as it gave away 10 of the units. Only 30 remain.

Metro Action Commission spokeswoman Lisa Gallon said she's pleased her agency can help.

She said, "We have situations where folks are cooling their homes with fans and you know, on a daylike today that can not be an effective way to cool off your home. When we're able to give away large air conditioners, we're pleased with that."

People older than 65 are also eligible for the free air conditioning units

The commission is also making a plea for more private donations, as they help fund such projects.

To avoid a heat-related emergency, Vanderbilt University Medical Center recommends the following:

Avoid prolonged direct exposure to bright sunlight-take a time out in the shade, wear a broad-brimmed hat, or shield yourself from the sun in some other way.

Wear light-colored, loose-fitting cotton clothing.

Drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids. Alcohol predisposes people to heat stroke or heat exhaustion.

Remember that some people are more vulnerable than others: the very young, the very old, and people who are taking diuretics or anti-hypertensive medications have greater risk from the heat.

Know the symptoms of heat problems: "Just not feeling right" --lethargy, dizziness, trouble concentrating and slurred speech are common early symptoms.

Know how to respond to heat problems: Get affected person to a cool area out of the direct sunlight, keep them wet with cool water or wet towels, turn a fan on them to help cool the body. If the person quickly feels better, it's likely that no further medical attention is needed. If symptoms persist, get the person to a doctor.

How hot will it get in your neighborhood? Visit www.Nashvillewx.com .

Copyright 2007 by WKRN Nashville Tennessee. All Rights Reserved.